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FRANZ MARC

EXHIBITION

November 11 · December 7

BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

CURT VALENTIN

32 East 57th Street New York

24. VI. 1942.

No. 3

FRANZ MARC *by Robert J. Goldwater*

When Franz Marc died in March, 1916 at the age of thirty-six, he had been granted only five years of personal expression. The *Red Horses* of 1911 was the first picture in which he found his own style, and it began a series of paintings which, in spite of "influences" and "movements" remained peculiarly his. Close friend of Klee and Kandinsky, founder, with them, of the *Blaue Reiter,* intimate associate of Macke and Campendonk, his style follows a persistent and personal development unbroken to the very end of his life. In his own house in the country, in sketches and colored postcards sent back to his wife and friends from the front, he continued the expression of philosophic and artistic convictions which the war only intensified.

Of course Franz Marc had studied and worked before 1911. Son of an academic artist, he was sent to the Academy in Munich, where, from 1901 to 1903 he lived in the midst of a story-telling German naturalism that had changed little from the sixties and seventies of the preceding

century. In 1903 he went to Paris, there discovered the impressionists and collected Japanese prints, and (like Leibl thirty-five years before him) was impressed by Manet's technical virtuosity and subtlety of vision to the extent of imitating him for a brief period. But this trip, and his second in 1907, were chiefly important in giving Marc an intimate knowledge of an art which, much as he admired its solutions of the problems of form, color, and composition, he felt had to be surpassed in emotional intensity, in sentiment, and in meaning. Back in Munich he was for a while drawn to the group of artists connected with the magazine *Jugend* who continued to work in that decorative, linear style of the nineties better known to us through its French equivalent of *art nouveau*. In the main, however, the years 1905 to 1910 were spent trying to develop a style susceptible of powerful emotional expression within the limits of naturalistic representation.

In 1911 Kandinsky, Klee, and Marc formed the group known through the name of their publication of the following year: *Der Blaue Reiter*. And here naturalistic standards were thrown overboard. The paintings of Matisse and Picasso, the primitive sculpture of America, Africa, and Oceania, the drawings of children, and the folk arts of Europe are all used to point the road to a new ideal—an art which, no longer bound by superficial appearances, will penetrate the outward forms of things to give expression to their essential meanings. Any stylization of contour, any arbitrary use of color is permissible, if only it helps to convey the significance of the subject. This was the purpose of Franz Marc's subsequent painting.

He wished especially to interpret the animal world, because it was above all in beasts that he found those qualities he felt lacking in men and in himself: Harmony within their own beings, a group cooperation unquestioningly accepted and harmoniously carried out, and a successful submission and adaptation to the laws of nature. Because man struggled (with himself, with others, with the world), and the beasts did not, he was "ugly" and they were "pure." This harmony Marc expresses in his pictures by means of a continuity of design that spreads from animal to animal until all are united in a common movement and a common mood, and from the group to its setting in nature until all parts of the painting are tied together in a single rhythm. He thus achieves a decorative form expressive (or in the language of the French symbolists an "equivalent") of the meaning of his subject. The colors too now serve the same end.

No longer limited by mere correct representation, they may vary as content and mood determine, may be bright and contrasting or unified and sombre, changing as the artist's intention changes. Thus were painted the series of the "Horses," the large and the small, the red, the blue, the yellow, and the gold, each with the rhythm of its design and the harmony of its colors expressive of some other aspect of the nature proper to this animal. And thus the landscape picks up the broad and quiet curves of the backs of the "Red Horses," and crowds in upon the closely packed, excited mass of the "Tower of Blue Horses."

But this style of curved, sweeping forms, and broad, unified color areas at once decorative and emotionally expressive, does not last long. Driven by a desire for broader meaning, for a style less dependent upon his own personality and the way in which he as an individual sees the world, trying to convey the universal rather than the particular qualities of his subjects, Marc delves further and further into abstraction. Undoubtedly these pictures of 1913, 1914, and 1915 are influenced by the work that Picasso and Braque were doing at the time in Paris. But though he may use the forms they develop—interpenetration of planes, closed and uniformly filled picture surface, etc.—Marc adapts their intellectual analyses to his own expressive ends. He thus produces integrated and powerful compositions that have at once a closely knit structure and the sweep of rhythmic movement, paintings whose angular designs contain the symbolic sentiment for which he strove.

With them the brief story of Franz Marc's painting stops, and we can only ask the inevitable question of any painter who has died young: how would his work have continued? For in his short career he produced an *oeuvre* unique in style and personality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Alfred H. Barr,* Cubism and Abstract Art, New York 1931. Modern German Art, New York 1931.—*Robert J. Goldwater,* Primitivism in Modern Painting, New York 1938.—*Sheldon Cheney,* A Primer of Modern Art, New York 1924.—*Wassily Kandinsky,* Franz Marc, Cahiers d'Art, Paris 1936.—*Franz Marc,* Briefe, Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen. 2 vol. 35 illustrations, Berlin 1920.—Der Blaue Reiter, Edited by Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, Munich 1912.—*Aloys Schardt,* Franz Marc, Berlin 1936. 115 illustrations.

No. 13

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND APHORISMS

by Franz Marc

Early in my life I found man ugly, and animals seemed to me lovelier and purer; but even in them I discovered so much conflict of feeling and such ugliness, that instinctively, from inner necessity, my representations became ever more schematic and abstract.

Impious mankind, that surrounded me (and especially its men), did not arouse my real feelings, while the natural, undisturbed feeling for life that the beasts possess touched off everything good and harmonious within me.

Is there a more mysterious idea for an artist than the conception of how nature is mirrored in the eyes of an animal? How does a horse see the world, or an eagle, or a doe, or a dog? How wretched and how soulless, is our convention of placing animals in a landscape which belongs to our eyes, instead of sinking ourselves in the soul of the animal in order to imagine his preceptions.

The most important part of a thought is the predicate. The subject is only its premise. The object is an unimportant afterthought making the ideal special and banal. I can paint a picture: the roe; Pisanello has painted such. I can however

also wish to paint a picture "The rose feels." How infinitely sharper an intellect must a painter have in order to paint this. The Egyptians have done it. The "rose". Manet has painted that. The rose "flowers". Who has painted the flowering rose? The Indians.

In the twentieth century we will live among strange men and faces, new images, and unimaginable noises.

The people itself (and I do not mean the "masses"), has always given art its essential style. The artist merely clarifies and fulfils the will of the people. But when the people does not know what it wants, or, worst of all, wants nothing . . . , then its artists, driven to seeking their own form, remain isolated, and become martyrs.

Folk art, that is the feeling of people for artistic form, can only arise again when the whole jumble of worn out art concepts of the nineteenth century has been wiped from the memory of generations.

The art of the future must give form to our scientific convictions: this is our religion and our truth, and it is profound and weighty enough to produce the greatest style and the greatest revaluation of form that the world has ever seen.

Translated by R.J.G.

No. 16

LIBRARY

No. 20

CATALOGUE

1 HERD OF DEER
Watercolor, 1909, 4 x 11 inches
Lent by Miss Saidie A. May, Baltimore

2 THREE HORSES
Gouache, 1911, 8¾ x 13¾ inches
Lent by Mr. Rudolf Hirsch, Narberth, Pa.

3 THE RED HORSES
Oil, 1911, 46⅞ x 71¼ inches
Lent anonymously

4 HORSE AND BULL*
Watercolor, 1911, 4½ x 5⅛ inches

5 THE WATERFALL*
Oil, 1912, 65¾ x 62 inches

6 ANTELOPE*
Gouache, 1912, 3¾ x 4½ inches

7 ELEPHANT
Pencil, 1912, 5½ x 4¼ inches
Lent by Mr. Lyonel Feininger, New York

8 THE GOOD SHEPHERD*
Oil, 1912, 34½ x 32½ inches

9 THE YELLOW COW*
Oil, 1912, 24½ x 34½ inches

10 FAIRY ANIMAL*
Woodcut and watercolor, 1913, 8¾ x 5⅜

11 COMPOSITION WITH ANIMALS
Watercolor, 1913, 15½ x 18 inches
Lent by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

12 ANTELOPES
Watercolor, 1913, 12¾ x 19 inches
Lent by Miss Saidie A. May, Baltimore

13 THE UNHAPPY TYROL
Oil, 1913, 52 x 80 inches
Lent by Mr. Willem Beffie, Brooklyn

14 THE RED COW
Oil, 1913, 28 x 56 inches
Lent by Mr. Willem Beffie, Brooklyn

15 THE YELLOW HORSE
Oil, 1913, 44 x 52 inches
Lent by Mr. Willem Beffie, Brooklyn

16 THE BEWITCHED MILL
Oil, 1913, 52½ x 56 inches
Lent by The Art Institute of Chicago

No. 19

17 ANIMALS UNDER THE RAINBOW*
Gouache, 1913, 6 x 10 inches

18 BLACK WOLVES
Watercolor, 1913, 14 3/8 x 17 inches
Lent by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

19 DONKEYS
Watercolor, 1913, 8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches
Lent by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

20 ANTELOPE
Watercolor, 1913, 15 5/8 x 18 3/4 inches
Lent by the Museum of Art (Rhode Island School of Design), Providence

21 THREE HORSES
Tempera, 1913, 18 3/4 x 14 1/2 inches
Lent by the Museum of Art (Rhode Island School of Design), Providence

22 LANDSCAPE WITH ANIMALS*
Gouache, 1913, 16 3/4 x 14 inches

23 CATTLE IN JUNGLE
Oil, 1914, 43 3/8 x 39 1/2 inches
Lent anonymously

24 DEER AND GOAT*
Oil, 1914, 23 1/2 x 16 inches

25 BLUE HORSES
Watercolor, 1914, 7 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches
Lent by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

26-30. WOODCUTS

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* Items marked with an asterisk are for sale.

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